

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 079117

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BBAK, HO

SUBJECT: PAYMENTS BY UNITED BRANDS

REF: STATE 78970

EYES ONLY FOR AMBASSADOR

1. IN WEEK-END MEETING WITH UB VICE-PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR, OF WHICH DEPT. INFORMED LATE MONDAY, MINECON BENNATON STATED EMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA FULLY AWARE OF SECRET PAYMENT TO BENNATON/LOPEZ. BENNATON CITED AS PROOF EMBASSY'S URGENT REQUEST ON FRIDAY FOR MEETING WITH LOPEZ WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY WITHDRAWN. (COMMENT: THIS IS ODD SINCE BENNATON HAD REQUESTED URGENT MEETING MUCH EARLIER IN WEEK. IT IS CONCEIVABLE HE MIGHT HAVE CHANGED TOPIC, HOWEVER.) BENNATON DID NOT INDICATE SOURCE OF INFORMATION. HE DID NOT REQUEST ANY UB ACTION ALTHOUGH HE DID HAVE GOOD GRACE
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TO STATE THAT, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, PROMISED SECOND

PAYMENT WOULD NOT BE EXPECTED.

2. ACCORDING TO TAYLOR, BENNATON HAS DISCUSSED THIS PROBLEM WITH LOPEZ WHO IS DETERMINED, IF STORY BREAKS, TO DENY IT FLATLY AS RAVINGS OF A MAD-MAN WHO COMMITTED

SUICIDE (ELI BLACK). THUS, WHATEVER LOPEZ AND BENNATON KNOW OR SUSPECT, THEY CLEARLY DO NOT HAVE WHOLE STORY SINCE LOPEZ' PROPOSED LINE OBVIOUSLY DOESN'T MEET FACTS OF DISCOVERY THROUGH AUDIT, UB'S ATTEMPTS TO AVOID PUBLICATION, ETC.

3. WE SEE A DANGER IN ALL THIS; NAMELY, THE PRESS GUIDANCE SENT TO YOU MONDAY NIGHT (REF), WHICH WILL BE USED BY DEPT IN ANY EVENT WHEN ASKED, CONTRADICTS LOPEZ' PROPOSEDLINE. GIVEN THE CURRENT SITUATION IN HONDURAS THIS CONFLICT, AND OUR STATEMENT OF THE FACTS, WILL CERTAINLY BE USED BY OPPOSITION FORCES--AND THAT COULD BE A LOT OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE--FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. THIS WOULD THREATEN TO ENMESH US IN THE SHAKEY LOCAL POLITICAL SITUATION.

4. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND ALTHOUGH WE CONTINUE TO FEEL THAT NO RPT. NO INITIATIVES BY DEPT. WOULD BE APPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME, WE WOULD WELCOME ANY COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE FOR HANDLING THIS MATTER IN HONDURAS. SPECIFICALLY, HOW REAL ARE THE DANGERS SET OUT IN PARA. 3 ABOVE AS YOU SEE THEM, AND WHAT OTHER PROBLEMS DO YOU SEE?

5. MEANWHILE, SHOULD LOPEZ OR BENNATON APPROACH YOU ON THIS MATTER, INSTRUCTIONS IN PARA. 12 OF DEPT.'S 77677 STAND. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE079117
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DLAZAR:RMC
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750121-1031
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750470/aaaacmoa.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 STATE 78970
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 SEP 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <06 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PAYMENTS BY UNITED BRANDS
TAGS: BBAK, HO
To: TEGUCIGALPA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006